

## Abstract

The invention allows several users to manipulate complex data interactively, but separately, and then have the results of their inputs merged. It is based on hierarchical planning which matches typical business environments. The planning process is distributed over the management hierarchy and each level may contribute one or more alternative plans for consideration by a superior level. The distribution of the process is carried out using computer-enabled 'delegation'. Relationships are specified between a dimensional structure and a responsibility structure such that sub-plans and plans using the dimensional structure of a planning data repository (PDR) may be partitioned into components corresponding to the responsibility structure. Part of 'delegation' is the process of setting up the conditions, requirements, etc. for a subordinate to draft one or more sub-plans for their particular area. The subordinate then submits one or more of these sub-plans based on these conditions and information in the PDR, as well as on their specific experience and other (local) input. On 'submission', this sub-plan is able to be incorporated into higher level sub-plans. During the submission process sub-plans are integrated into a single plan, ensuring overall consistency of the data, and conformance with any constraints defined by users. The process is iterative in nature.

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